

H.R. 4195. An act to authorize early repayment of obligations to Bureau of Reclamation within Rogue River Valley Irrigation District.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed bills on the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested.

S. 310. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey the Newlands Project Headquarters and Maintenance Yard Facility to the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District in the State of Nevada.

S. 435. An act to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate a segment of the Farmington River and Salmon Brook in the State of Connecticut for study for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes.

S. 648. An act to amend the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991 to extend the authority for drought assistance.

S. 1025. An act to amend the Act entitled "An Act to provide for the construction of the Cheney division, Wichita Federal reclamation project, Kansas, and for other purposes" to authorize the Equus Beds Division of the Wichita Project.

S. 1096. An act to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate portions of the Musconetcong River in the State of New Jersey as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes.

S. 1165. An act to provide for the expansion of the James Campbell National Wildlife Refuge, Honolulu County, Hawaii.

S. 1496. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a pilot program under which up to 15 States may issue electronic Federal migratory bird hunting stamps.

S. 1552. An act to amend Public Law 97-435 to extend the authorization for the Secretary of the Interior to release certain conditions contained in a patent concerning certain land conveyed by the United States to Eastern Washington University until December 31, 2009.

S. 1578. An act to reauthorize the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basin endangered fish recovery implementation programs.

S. 1869. An act to reauthorize the Coastal Barrier Resources Act, and for other purposes.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will recognize up to seven Members on each side for 1-minute speeches.

CONGRATULATING APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL TEAM

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing and congratulating the 2005 NCAA Division I-AA Football National Champions, Appalachian State University.

This courageous and athletic group of students, along with their coaches and support staff from Boone, North Carolina, defeated the University of Northern Iowa last night in Chattanooga, Tennessee, by a score of 21-16.

This marks the first time in history that a team from ASU has won a national championship. This championship culminates a tremendous year of Mountaineer football that saw the team finish the season 8-3, winning the Southern Conference championship before winning four playoff games, including last night's national championship game.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of this football team and their coach, not just for winning a national championship but for the character and teamwork they display.

The Mountaineers have excelled under the leadership of Coach Jerry Moore, the winningest coach in the history of the Southern Conference. He has a talented staff, including Coach Lonnie Galloway, the son-in-law of our colleague from North Carolina, Robin Hayes.

I wish my duties in Washington did not prevent me from being in Chattanooga last night with so many Appalachian students, alumni, and supporters. I would have liked to have seen first hand the crushing defense in the fourth quarter, led by Jason Hunter and Marques Murrell. I wish I could have been there to witness in person the courage of quarterback Richie Williams, who played through a painful ankle injury suffered last week in the semi-final game against Furman.

Please join me in congratulating the Appalachian State University football team. I am proud of my long history with ASU. I am proud to represent this fine university in Congress. Go Mountaineers.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HAYES). The Chair thanks the gentlewoman.

LIABILITY IMMUNITY FOR BIG PHARMA

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Wake up, America. In addition to giving away the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge to the oil companies, the Defense appropriations bill is rumored to contain a massive holiday gift to the pharmaceutical industry in the form of liability immunity for pandemic vaccines. The liability is not the reason for vaccine shortages, especially in the case of avian flu.

This giveaway will not result in increased vaccine production. Why does Big Pharma want these liability exemptions? Because there is reason to doubt the safety of at least one of these vaccines. Chiron, the same company which allowed contamination of half of last year's flu vaccine supply, is hoping to use MF59 in an avian flu vaccine. MF59 is a compound that contains squalene, which is on the short list of potential causes for the chronic debilitating illnesses experienced by our veterans of the first Persian Gulf war.

At a minimum, this issue must be debated in front of the American people,

not slipped in behind closed doors into this large bill. I urge my colleagues to reject this liability immunity.

CONGRATULATING DIVISION I-AA NATIONAL CHAMPION APPALACHIAN STATE MOUNTAINEERS

(Mr. COBLE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, the frigid unforgiving winds that normally blow across the Blue Ridge Mountains during the months of winter are blowing less brutally and less severely today. For on this day, these winds sweep across the campus of Appalachian State University, home of the National I-AA champions of intercollegiate football.

I attended Appalachian State, Mr. Speaker, and I know I speak for many in the Congress and many congressional staffers as well in conveying hearty congratulations and best wishes to Chancellor Peacock, Coach Moore, and the entire Appalachian community.

Mr. Speaker, I join you in enthusiastically declaring, Go Mountaineers from Appalachian State.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR THE WEALTHY

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, well, the Christmas tree is lit and decorated on the west front of the Capitol; but meanwhile here in the House Chamber, the Republican elves are toiling on the gifts to be put under the tree for the American people.

For the wealthiest, the investors who earn over \$300,000 a year, fabulous gifts, huge new extensions of tax cuts. Unfortunately for seniors, working families, and the poor, there is nothing but a box of rhetoric. They even have to forego the usual lump of coal because it is too expensive with the Bush failed energy policy.

Even worse, the tax cut for the wealthiest among us, those who earn over \$300,000 a year, will be paid for by cuts in student financial, food and nutrition assistance, school lunches, Medicaid care for poor people. The list kind of goes on and on. Merry Christmas.

WE CAN HAVE BOTH FREEDOM AND SECURITY

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, history has shown that free peoples are willing to give up civil liberties or freedom in the name of security. Our forefathers knew this, so our Constitution protects us from government taking rights in the name of security.

Mr. Speaker, people have rights. Government has no rights. Government has power and it obtains it when we forfeit our rights to the government. In this time of terrorism, our government uses high-tech surveillance to capture them. This is good. But the fourth amendment states: "The right of people to be secure from unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated."

It is the duty of the judiciary, not this body, not even the executive branch, to protect those rights and review searches.

When I was a judge in Texas, I signed hundreds of warrants. I was even the State wiretap judge, and I found that warrants make better police officers and they make better criminal cases.

In this post-9/11 era, we cannot allow our zeal to be safe to get in the way of judicial review of search warrants and wiretaps while continuing to provide tools for law enforcement to capture those terrorists. You see, Mr. Speaker, we can have it both ways. We can be safe and secure and maintain our civil rights as a free people. That's just the way it is.

MEDICARE INFORMED CHOICE ACT

(Mr. LIPINSKI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, there is one issue of great concern that I hear about over and over again when I am back home, the needlessly complicated Medicare prescription drug program.

Seniors are confused and frustrated as they attempt to study 60 plans in order to first decide whether to join and then to choose a plan to sign up for. Many are simply giving up.

I have already held half a dozen informational seminars on the program and every session has been packed. There is clearly a problem.

Congress could and should make the progress better, more affordable, and less confusing by allowing Medicare to negotiate prices with drug companies. But the very least that Congress must do is pass a Medicare Informed Choice Act which would delay the enrollment penalty, prevent beneficiaries from losing their employer-based coverage, and allow seniors to switch plans if they make a mistake.

Given the current confusion, it is essential that we allow beneficiaries to take their time, check the facts, and know their options without being rushed to choose. We owe no less to our seniors.

IRAQ'S DEMOCRATIC VICTORY

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, yesterday's New York Times proclaims loudly that "Iraqis, Including Sunnis, Voted in Large Numbers" during Thursday's historic elections.

Throughout the world, people were waking up to the great news about Iraq's most recent democratic victory. USA Today discussed the inspiring turnout in Iraq, while even Knight Ridder declared that high voter turnout in Iraq promises fully representative parliament.

The National Review reported that U.S. troops describe a festive atmosphere across Iraq. The Los Angeles Times wrote that the ballot box is the new battle ground. The Boston Globe described how, for one Sunni family, casting ballots was an act of resistance.

I was particularly pleased to learn that the BBC reported the Iraqi vote met global standards. From New York to London, the mainstream media finally recognized and reported the clear successes of the election which delivered a devastating blow to terrorists and ultimately helped protect American families.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

STOP THE MEDICARE INSANITY

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, very few decisions are more personal or important than health care decisions. And when Washington gets involved in health care, especially in Medicare, government must put patients first.

Decisions already made, if not changed, will result in 38 percent of the doctors seeing fewer Medicare patients, half of physicians less likely to participate in Medicare Advantage and a third of the doctors no longer visiting nursing homes.

Unless Congress acts, the ability for seniors to access quality medical care will get worse.

The way our government pays doctors for taking care of our parents and our grandparents through Medicare is unbelievably broken. Physicians will be subjected to a 26 percent pay cut over the next 5 years, and an official of the government agency in charge of Medicare said they will cut doctors pay until they stop seeing Medicare patients and then they might fix it.

Mr. Speaker, then will be too late.

Americans deserve better from their representatives. Those who care for all of us are being driven out of business by a government that cares more about money than health. Let's stop this insanity.

□ 1415

RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, Congress is about to go home in a few days either today, tomorrow, Monday,

Tuesday, sometime in the next few days, and this House, again, has failed to increase the minimum wage.

There are large numbers of people in this country, people with children, often single mothers, sometimes, not usually, adults in their 20s and 30s and 40s who make \$5.15 an hour. The Senate finally increased the minimum wage. The House is going to go home sometime in the next few days having failed to even bring up to a vote an increase in the minimum wage.

Since this House floor session began about 16 minutes ago, in that time, a minimum wage worker would have earned about \$1.10 or \$1.15. A CEO of a Fortune 500 company in this same 16 minutes would have earned about \$1,500. Mr. Speaker, we can do a lot better in this body than we have done this year.

GREAT AND HEARTWARMING NEWS FROM IRAQ

(Mr. HAYES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, great and heartwarming news from Iraq.

Early this morning, I received an e-mail from a soldier serving in Iraq which provides one small example of how democracy is progressing in Iraq and how our troops along with the Iraqi security forces are making a difference.

He wrote: "The highlight of my day, Election Day, was in south Baghdad, where there were no polling stations in January 2005 and where many Sunnis did not vote in October 2005. I watched as two affluent local sheiks walked into the polling station together holding hands, which is a huge sign of respect here. What was moving about this was one sheik was Shia, the other Sunni. They told me how much they appreciated what the United States had done for them and that they could never repay us. The Sunni said, 'We are tired of violence and the fighting that destroys our people and our country; that they would work to make the U.S. proud and that the sacrifices of American soldiers is respected and appreciated.'"

God bless our troops.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

(Mr. FARR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, while we are locked up here today, I would like to wish my wife Sherry a very happy birthday. This week, I have been telling her, has been a real doozy for civil liberties.

We learned that both the Pentagon and the National Security Agency have been spying on thousands of innocent Americans. Apparently, the NSA was doing it at the direction of President Bush.